

## **Ulysses S. Grant – Eighteenth President of the United States**

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Ulysses S. Grant was born in Point Pleasant, Ohio, on April 27, 1822. He married Julia Dent on August 12, 1848. He served in two wars, the Mexican War and the Civil War. In April, 1865 Grant's armies captured both Petersburg and Richmond. Robert E. Lee made one last attempt to break through to the South, but with no food and half his soldiers too weak, Lee was forced to surrender.

In August, 1867, President Andrew Johnson appointed Grant as his Secretary of War. Congress wanted Edwin Stanton back; so Grant resigned. Johnson was very upset because he thought Grant would stay in office no matter what Congress wanted.

Grant then served as the eighteenth President of the United States, from 1869 to 1877. Grant won by 300,000 popular votes, but it was the black vote of 450,000 that put him over the top. Grant made two statements in his inaugural address. He wished to guarantee African Americans the right to vote, and he wanted proper treatment for the Indians, hoping they would be granted citizenship. Since Grant had promised to help the Indians, one of his first acts as President was to name General Ely S. Parker Commissioner of Indian Affairs. To help educate Indians and have them treated as individuals they developed a program called, "Grant's Peace Policy".

In March, 1870, the Fifteenth Amendment, which gave African Americans the right to vote was ratified. However, the southern legislators did not take long to pass

laws limiting the freedom of the former slaves. As the African Americans lost their right to vote, the Radical Republican influence died out. The door had been opened for the blacks but shut quickly, and it would take over a century before they could achieve their dream that was taken from them. Grant supported the rights of the freed blacks in the South. He opposed the recently organized Ku Klux Klan which south, through acts of terrorism to prevent blacks from voting.

A most notable achievement of his administration was the settlement of the Alabama claims dispute with Great Britain by the Treaty of Washington (1871). The treaty dealt with grievances stemming from the American Civil War and cross-border issues with the newly formed Dominion of Canada. Its negotiation helped to avert what some felt was an inevitable war between the two parties. One of the negotiators on the British side was Canadian Prime Minister, Sir John A. Macdonald. Although the treaty was signed in the name of the British Empire, Macdonald's presence established that the newly formed Dominion of Canada would at least take part in settling foreign matters that affected it directly, especially with respect to dealings with the United States. The Alabama had been one of several Confederate warships built by England during the Civil War. The United States demanded compensation for damages done to the Union merchant marine by these ships and in 1872 was awarded \$15.5 million. This greatly irritated Macdonald, but he nevertheless persuaded the Canadian House of Commons to ratify the treaty.

Grant had more to do with establishing the American nation on a gold basis than any other President. People convinced Grant not to sell the government gold so their own gold would become more valuable and could sell it at a higher price. Grant finally stopped this and ordered the sale of \$4 million in gold. This caused a crash in the price of gold and financial ruin for many.

In 1885, suffering from throat cancer, Grant completed his autobiography, *The Personal Memoirs of U. S. Grant*. Shortly after this was done, he passed away on July 23, 1885. Ulysses S. Grant was a normal person like the rest of us, even though he was than the youngest man to become President, at the age of 46.

All in all, his life and his deeds earned him respect, love and honor, the true measure of a man's worth. And at least his last wishes were met. His family was taken care of. Ulysses Grant and his wife are buried in New York City in a large tomb overlooking the Hudson River. "Let us have peace" are the words on Grant's tomb. They are his own words. [From Lucille Falkof, *Ulysses S. Grant*; Robert P. Howard, *Illinois, A History of the Prairie State*; John F. Kennedy, *Profiles in Courage*; and W. E. Woodward, *Meet General Grant*.]